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# Changing Face of Access to Government information in Japan: Issues Concerning Policy, the Electronic Environment, and the Role of Libraries and Archives

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# 日本政府信息存取模式的变迁:政策、电子环境和图书馆与档案馆的角色变化

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**摘要** 政府信息存取服务是社会的福祉,可以为当今与未来的法治及问责制度的制定提供基本依据。因此,作为中介机构的图书馆和档案馆应该为公众获取政府信息提供便利,使政府信息的潜在价值得以充分实现,从而造福全社会。随着电子政务和所谓“电子政府”的兴起,人们越来越清楚地认识到图书馆和档案馆在政府信息存取方面的作用。尤其是在中国:2008年开始实施的《中华人民共和国政府信息公开条例》规定国家档案馆和公共图书馆应成为大众查阅政府电子或纸质信息的场所。

**关键词** 政府信息 变迁 政策 电子环境 图书馆 档案馆 日本

日本政府最近也出台了一系列政策,使政府信息存取服务和图书馆与档案馆在该领域的作用发生了根本性的改变。其中,最突出的政策措施如下。

1. 2009年7月起开始实施的《公共记录管理法(*Public Records Management Act*)》对日本国家档案馆的角色做出了新的定义;
2. 2009年7月修订《国立国会图书馆法》及《著作权法》,旨在加强国立国会图书馆对政府及公共机构信息的网络存档功能;
3. 建议加强《图书馆法》中第九条规定(“国家和地方政府有义务确保大众可在公共图书馆自由获取其正式出版物”)的效力。

本文分析了日本有关的政策转变并预言近期实施这些措施时将会面临的挑战。文章还探讨了图书馆和档案馆之间的关系及潜在合作机遇,指出两者应在现有的电子环境下通过确保政府信息获取的便利度为社区福利做出新的贡献。

## Changing Face of Access to Government Information in Japan: Issues Concerning Policy, the Electronic Environment, and the Role of Libraries and Archives

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**Abstract** Access to government information helps promote community well-being in that this serves as a basis for the rule of law and accountability with regard to both current and future generations. Intermediary institutions such as libraries and archives are supposed to facilitate such access by providing a means to access information that allows the potential contained in government information to be fully exploited to the benefit of the community. In this regard, the role of libraries and archives is increasingly being recognized within the context of an expanding electronic environment and a growing trend toward what is termed the e-government. Such a scenario particularly applies to China where, in 2008, the “Regulation of the People’s Republic of China on the Disclosure of Government Information” designated the national archives and public libraries throughout the country as places where government information can be accessed in both print and electronic format.

**关键词** government information changing policy library archive Japan

Japan has also recently undergone a radical change in policy concerning access to government information and the role of libraries and archives. Among these, the most prominent policy initiatives are listed below.

1. Enactment of the Public Records Management Act in July 2009, which includes new roles for the National Archives of Japan.
2. Revision of the National Diet Library (NDL) Law and Copyright Law in July 2009 that seeks to enhance web archiving with regard to the government and public organization in relation to NDL.
3. Proposal to enhance the effectiveness of Section 9 of the Library Law, which stipulates that it is the duty of national and local governments to ensure free access to official publications at public libraries.

This paper analyses such policy changes in Japan and identifies the challenges in implementing the policy initiatives over the immediate future. The analysis will also discuss the relationship and potential collaboration between libraries and archives in making a better contribution to improving community well-being by ensuring that an appropriate level of access to government information is available in the context of the existing electronic environment.

## 1 Introduction

Government information provides significant resources for library services that benefit the wider community, as will be discussed in greater detail in due course. Government information can thereby be divided into two kinds: (1) that published or disseminated for the purpose of providing information to citizens about government laws, policies, and activities; (2) that used within government but which is not available for immediate public consumption (Koga, 2005a, p. 48). The former includes government publications and web content, whereas the latter concerns government records accessible to citizens through "freedom of information" protocols. Moreover, information of historical interest might also be transferred to archives for public access, or may be published as historical material in paper form and/or in electronic format where it might be available in a "digital archive." In short, although libraries mainly appear to deal with published, or disseminated, government information, they may also deal with non-published (which could possibly be published at a later date) government information. In addition, the dividing line between libraries and archives with regard to services that provide government information is now becoming blurred due to the increasing influence of the electronic environment, an issue that has been discussed in a previous paper by the present author (Koga, 2005b). In such a situation, new policy initiatives need to be adopted to promote management of and access to government information and to secure the role of "information intermediaries," such as libraries and archives, which facilitate both management and access.

Recently the author has published an article briefly outlining how such a revolution in policy with regard to access to government information has taken place in Japan (Koga, 2010). The present article builds on this by examining the development and challenges to implementing policy and promoting access to government information and how this can be taken forward.

This article also supplements the author's previous articles which discussed government information policy and roles of libraries and archives. They include both the paper presented at the second SILF conference (Koga, 2004) and its revised version (Koga, 2005a).

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Role of government information revisited

In a previous article presented at the second SILF conference (Koga, 2004, p. 357; Koga, 2005a, p. 48—49), the author suggested that government information serves four roles as part of the knowledge infrastructure: (1) basis for the rule of law, (2) quality-of-life issues, (3) historical and cultural heritage, and

(4) accountability for current and future generations. Each of these factors relate to community well-being; First, people need to have access to and understand legal information in order to realize the rule of law in order to live safely and comply with the law. The rule of law is also important with regard to market activities. Second, government information is important for issues concerning quality of life, in that it can provide details about toxic materials and health care that commercial bodies may not be able to provide to an appropriate standard due to limitations relating to market forces and information biases. Third, government information of historical interest, which is accessible through libraries, archives, and digital archive websites, contributes to community understanding and helps nurture community identity. Fourth, public access to the long-term preservation of government information ensures accountability of the government; in other words, it explains “when, what, who, where, why and how” with regard to the government’s past activities, and the effect which this might have on the current situation. This also contributes to the protection of citizens’ rights, which is contained in government information, especially in government records, that describes a claim which may have been made by citizens and the transactions which have taken place between the government and citizens.

The abovementioned criteria in relation to the way in which government information contributes to community well-being can apply to any government. To fully meet with such criteria, however, the role of libraries and archives in ensuring an appropriate level of management and preservation as well as access to government information needs to be emphasized. The importance of such factors with regard to the libraries and archives as practiced in China will be outlined in the next section.

## 2.2 Access to government information in China

Jin(2009), who is based at the Shenzhen Science & Technology Library, has described the recent policy and practical issues of access to government information at public libraries in China. According to Jin, the “Regulation of the People’s Republic of China on the Disclosure of Government Information” provided a major policy initiative relating to these issues. Thus, Article 16 of the Regulation states the following(Jin, 2009, p. 2):

The people’s government agencies at various levels shall set up a place for consulting government information at national archives and public libraries, and equip with corresponding facilities to provide convenience for citizens, legal persons or other organizations to access government information.

Jin, however, also went on to set out the various challenges of implementing such a policy: popularity of public libraries as a place where government publications and online government information can be accessed, assessing in a general way how government information in print can be provided in an electronic format, development of catalogs and portal websites which reflect the needs of library users, upgrading the knowledge and skills base of librarians with regard to government information, and so forth.

With respect to such challenges, the relationship between libraries and archives seem to be especially important, as Jin(2009, p. 6) pointed out:

[T]o many of them[= scholars], it is legal for government agencies to select national archives to be public access points without mentioning libraries, because it is not written in the Regulation that government agencies should supply information to both national archives and public libraries simultaneously.

From a symposium report concerning the Regulation, Jin also cited that “libraries are more dependable in big cities, while government agencies in small and medium-sized towns and cities should rely more on archives because there are probably not enough facilities in libraries there.” It is interesting to note that the above

discussion implies that the archives are more popular than libraries “in small and medium-sized towns and cities” in China. This is opposite to the situation in Japan where, as of 2008, there were 3,106 public libraries in prefectures, cities, and towns (Japan Library Association, n. d.; see also, Takayama, 2010, p. 3044), but only 54 local public archives existed as defined in the Public Archives Act as of May 2010 (National Archives of Japan, n. d.; see also, Takayama, 2010, p. 3050). As a result, the differences between public libraries and archives in Japan have led to policy initiatives concerning access to government information being developed geared to the existing situation.

In general, the situation in China described by Jin provides an interesting example concerning the relationship between libraries and archives and government information. In addition, the development of policy for promoting access to government information and issues with regard to implementing policy in China is interesting in terms of its comparison to counterparts in Japan. The following chapter will examine recent policy developments concerning government information and the roles of libraries and archives in Japan.

### 3. Recent revolution in government information policy in Japan

This chapter deals with three major policy initiatives with respect to providing government information that was realized in 2008 and 2009 in Japan; (1) Enactment of Public Records Management Act, (2) Strengthening the archive of government websites by the National Diet Library (NDL), and (3) Enhancing the effectiveness of Section 9 of the Library Law concerning the dissemination of government publications in public libraries.

#### 3.1 Enactment of public records management act

As the author has explained in previous articles (Koga, 2005a; Koga, 2007b), the policy activities for improving public records management and empowerment of the National Archives of Japan (NAJ) has accelerated since 2003, when the committee under the Cabinet Secretary was established to promote government records management and archival activities. This policy development was strongly supported by the political leadership of Yasuo Fukuda, the former Chief Cabinet Secretary (2000–2004) and then by the Prime Minister (2007–2008). In 2007, a leading think tank in Japan issued legislative plans with regard to “Government Records Management Law.” At that time, however, how such legislative plans, or any modification of them, would have been realized was yet to be seen. (Koga, 2007b, p. 10).

Policy initiatives were promoted in 2007, thanks to the inauguration of Fukuda as Prime Minister as well as the number of scandals concerning the management of public records of which the latter includes the following.

- Mismanagement of pension records.
- Mismanagement of government reports concerning drug-induced hepatitis.
- Destruction of navigation diaries by the staff of the Maritime Self-Defense Forces.

At the beginning of 2008, Prime Minister Fukuda thus began furthering policy initiatives toward much more effective public record management, including.

- Setting up an advisory panel for overseeing public records management policy.
- Establishing the first-ever position of a Minister of the Cabinet Office in Charge of Public Records Management.

The advisory panel consisted of former senior government officials, legal scholars, journalists (no professionals or researchers on record management and archives, however), who issued the final report in November 2008 entitled “Management of public records which document the past, present and future: it is the time to promote the management as the national initiatives” (Advisory Panel, 2008). This provided an ideal system for public records management in Japan, and was referred to as the “gold model,” as well as providing a legislative plan. On the other hand, Ms. Yoko Kawakami, the first Minister in Charge of Public Records Management (Feb. -Aug. 2008), took the leadership in improving government records management, including field survey over records management at each ministry by herself. Subsequent Ministers, Ms.

Kyoto Nakayama (Aug. -Sep. 2008) and Ms. Yuko Obuchi (Sep. 2008-Sep. 2009), however, seemed reluctant to provide such leadership compared to that provided by Ms. Kawakami<sup>④</sup>. Interestingly, Matsuoka, a journalist of the Nikkei Newspaper and frequent reporter on archival and library issues in Japan, briefly described the policy background related to these events in relation to the Public Records Management Act (Matsuoka 2008).

The abovementioned initiatives were, however, suddenly endangered when Prime Minister Fukuda resigned in September 2008 due to the unpopularity of his Cabinet as well as a result of the fact that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had been in power over such a long period. In spite of this, Fukuda as a serving and prominent Congressman of the Lower House (*Shugiin*), continued in an attempt to realize legislation concerning public records management. The Cabinet thereby submitted a Bill of Public Records Management to the National Diet (Parliament) on March 3, 2009. Although there were some criticisms of the original Bill from opposition parties, as well as from scholars and citizen's groups regarding a move away from what "the gold model" had offered, the various disputes concerning the Bill were finally accepted by bringing in some revisions that had been requested by opposition parties. The revised Bill was then passed unanimously in June by both Houses in the National Diet—Lower House and Upper House (*Sangiin*). The Public Records Management Act (PRMA) was finally enacted on July 1, 2009, and is due to come into effect by April 2011.

The main points of this Act can be summarized as follows:

- The Act covers almost the entire lifecycle of the management of records, from creation of records, current record management to selection and preservation of archival records.
- The Act regulates management of the records of all national government agencies, whereas previously the management policy was overseen independently by each agency. The Act also regulates the management of records of quasi-government agencies, including national universities.
- Citizens have the right of access to both current and archival records, with some exceptions (e. g., national security, foreign affairs, privacy of ordinary people).
- The Prime Minister, not the President of NAJ, is ultimately in charge of the disposition of national government records.
- The Act empowers NAJ to support the government agencies' proper records management, including its field survey at the agencies, and advice and training programs for the government officials.
- A Board of Public Records Management, which includes experts in the management of records and archival issues, is to be established to supervise the management of government records and handle public claims concerning access to the records.

While this new act is expected to promote public records management at the national level, concrete results are yet to be realized. The following sets out some of the challenges associated with implementing the act: (1) the actual creation of public records for documenting important government activities (as opposed to mere oral communication), (2) management and preservation of electronic records and collaboration and/or cooperation with the National Archives and IT-oriented departments within the government, and (3) engagement of staff at NAJ and the Board of Public Records Management in order to provide more efficient management of records for government agencies. In addition, one of the significant flaws in this law consists in its failure to ensure education, employment, training, and promotion of professional archivists and managers of records.

It should be added that the supplementary provisions of PRMA state that the Act is to be reviewed after five years from the date when it come into effect, i. e., around 2016. The immediate challenge, nevertheless, concerns implementation of and compliance with PRMA within government organizations.

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④ The post of this Minister still exists even after the enactment of PRMA and the political power shift from the LDP to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in 2009.

### 3.2 The strengthening of the government archive websites by the NDL

Whereas the aforementioned policy initiatives concerning the management of public records has been prominent among communities of archivists and public administration as well as in the news, a further quiet but important revolution has also taken place in the area of government information: the strengthening of the government archive websites by the NDL.

The NDL, the central library in Japan, manages the archiving program for the web contents published in Japan, which is referred to as the Web Archiving Project, better known as "WARP." WARP began in 2004 as a pilot project, and was upgraded as an official program of NDL in 2006. The websites covered by WARP include those for electronic journals, national and local government agencies, quasi-government bodies, and universities. Before the new legislation of 2009, which will be discussed later, and owing to restrictions regarding legislation such as with Copyright Law, NDL, however, first required the permission of government agencies and other organizations to archive their web content for the purpose of WARP. Such restrictions had previously led to a restriction in the amount and frequency of web archiving, including archiving government websites, by NDL(Koga, 2005b).

One issue that needs to be emphasized at this point concerns the fact that under Copyright Law in Japan, the copyright-protected works include almost all government publications, with only a few exceptions with respect to texts concerning law, regulations, and court decisions. Before large amounts of government publications, including white papers, minutes of deliberation councils(*shingikai*), statistics reports, and so forth, can be used, permission is therefore first necessary from government organizations (regardless of whether these were central or local). Although there are a few exceptions that allowed the free use of government information without permission for the purpose education, citation, use of the press, etc., the Law in Japan does not provide a general exception to copyright protection such as can be found the United States where "fair use" is practiced. Thus, the management of web archiving, which involves copying of original web content and making available such contents on the web, requires the permission of copyright holders(Koga, 2003, p. 57) that also applies to almost all government websites, though the requirements with regard to government websites are to be mitigated by the new legislation as will be described in more detail below.

Another issue concerns the scope and limitations of legal deposit by NDL. The national libraries in several countries have ventured into electronic legal deposit that have targeted electronic—that is, online—formats. As emphasized in the author's previous article(Koga, 2005b, p. 7), and based on discussions with its advisory council, NDL postponed including online information within its legal deposit. In this sense, WARP existed as a different system from that of legal deposit. This is because legal deposit is based on a kind of compulsive system where publishers are forced to deposit publications in the national library, whereas, under WARP, NDL was required to seek permission from the publishers in order to extract web content.

On July 10, 2009, around one week after the Public Records Management Act was enacted, a new legislation aimed at the improvement of WARP was set up, targeting government web content; this law was based on the revision of the NDL Law and the Copyright Law. The purpose of these revisions was to strengthen the website archiving of national and local government agencies, independent administrative agencies, national universities, and similar organizations. In fact, the publications of such organizations are the subject of *Kancho Nohon* (legal deposit system of publications issued by governmental and local public entities), which is given special treatment as the deposit system of NDL, in terms of the number of copies and purpose of deposit(including international exchange). In this sense, the strengthened web archiving system exists as a sort of extension to *Kancho Nohon*. NDL will thus provide a web crawler system for the websites in order to facilitate automatic web archiving. In addition, the government and other related organizations will need to disable the technical measures that prevents the web crawler system of NDL from functioning; alternatively, they will need to make available their web contents for the purpose of NDL archiving program.



This system is thus essentially different from the previous permission-based WARP one. In addition, the revised Copyright Law grants NDL permission to copy(crawl) the websites without obtaining consent from the government or similar organizations.

It should be noted, however, that access to the archived content is a separate matter. In principle, access will be limited to NDL buildings in Tokyo and Kyoto(*Kansai-kan*), and NDL will need to get permission from the originating government and similar organizations to post the archived contents on the web and allow Internet users access to the contents.

The abovementioned revisions came into effect on April 1, 2010. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent the government and other related organizations, which serve as the target of the new web archiving system, will comply with the new legislation and to what extent the accessible and usable government web contents will increase.

It is worth noting that the abovementioned new legislation for improving web archiving arose as a result of a strong desire on the part of NDL to engage with the electronic environment, regardless of whether this included government or non-governmental publications and content. This has included projects involving a large-scale retrospective digitization of NDL collections, as well as the Japanese version of a digitized book search project which, contrary to Google Book Search, are to be promoted through cooperation with publishers in Japan. It is also worth mentioning that both the new legislation and the digitization activities in NDL stems largely from the leadership of Dr. Makoto Nagao, a prominent researcher of natural language processing and the Head Librarian of NDL since 2007.

### 3.3 Enhancing the effectiveness of Section 9 of the Library Law

Another quiet revolution that has taken place concerns access to government publications in a hard copy format at public libraries.

The Library Law in Japan, enacted in 1950, mainly covers the activities and management of public libraries. Section 9 of this law gives national and local governments the responsibility for disseminating its publications to public libraries which states(the information within parentheses has been added by the author) the following:

1. The [national] Government shall furnish public libraries established by prefectures with two copies of the Official Gazette and other documents which are made available for public information published by the National Printing Bureau.
2. Agencies of the national government and of local governments may furnish public libraries free of charge, upon request with publications and other data and materials which they publish.

This section has not yet been complied with since the enactment, due to the fact that there have not been enough measures, including a check or audit system, to motivate or force government organizations to supply public libraries with their publications. This issue finally became the target of criticism at the National Diet (Parliament) in 2008, when the revision of Library Law was discussed. Although Section 9 was not the main subject of the revision of June 2008<sup>①</sup>, several congressmen took advantage of the opportunity to ensure the effectiveness of this particular section.

Thus, a number of congressmen tabled a question regarding compliance with Section 9 of the Library Law in relation to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology(MEXT) which has jurisdiction over public library affairs. One of these, Mr. Seiji Osaka, a congressman at the Lower House, was widely respected as a champion of freedom of access to government information, a cause which he had continued to support since first becoming mayor of Niseko Town, Hokkaido(1994—2005). The Minister and the official in charge of public library affairs of MEXT responded to this important question by stating that the

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① The revision includes a more rigid evaluation of public library activities, a revised definition of library collections, which also includes online formats, etc.



aim of Section 9 was to provide free public access to government publications through public libraries, without charge for either the public or libraries, and that MEXT would urge other ministries of central government to comply with the section. Then, in August 2008, MEXT issued a memorandum to other ministries that reflected the abovementioned reply, which, however, resulted only in a small increase in government publication titles disseminated to public libraries.

The progress concerning compliance with Section 9 encouraged the Japan Library Association (JLA) to take advantage of the opportunity to promote the importance of free access to government publications at libraries and called for action to ensure further implementation. The Library Policy Program Committee of JLA, which acts as a research and advocacy group for library policy in Japan, generally oversees such measures, which includes (1) conducting research regarding the extent to which government publications have been disseminated to prefectural libraries, (2) sending an open letter to MEXT that encourages security regarding dissemination of government publications to prefectural libraries, (3) organizing seminars for improving the collection and use of government publications for librarians. JLA and the Committee are planning further active advocacy that aims to improve awareness of government organizations as to the importance of Section 9. The Committee also suggested that it would be beneficial if public libraries were to request government organizations to supply publications as a way of realizing greater compliance with Section 9 (Library Policy Program Committee, 2009, 2010).

#### 4. Analysis of government information policy in Japan

All in all, the abovementioned new policy initiatives in Japan cover a wide range of government information, including government records, government web contents, and hard-copy government publications. Although the three initiatives do not have any direct relationship, it is significant that they were realized almost at the same time at the end of 2000s. These initiatives, however, are only beginning and we therefore need to examine in detail how they might be implemented in the near future.

The present section will therefore assess the various background issues and will also examine the policy initiatives and challenges involved in implementing such initiatives.

##### 4.1 The pros and cons of leadership and top-down policy-making

As discussed above, the leadership of political and administrative bodies has contributed to implementing policy initiatives. In the political arena, Mr. Fukuda's sustained efforts led to the PRMA becoming a reality, and Ms. Kawakami—who had lost her seat at the Lower House in the 2008 election—also contributed to such efforts. It should also not be forgotten that the top management of NAJ contributed to the enactment of PRMA as well as the improved visibility of NAJ itself, which also included such managers as Mr. Mitsuoki Kikuchi, the 6th President of the NAJ, 2001–2009, and Prof. Masaya Takayama, the current 7th President and former Senior Vice-President (2005–2009) of NAJ<sup>①</sup>. In addition, Dr. Nagao reformed NDL to the extent that it became a more proactive institution, which especially dealt with digital information. It is safe to say that the new legislation regarding web archiving in relation to NDL mainly derived from Dr. Nagao's leadership. Although such leadership may have contributed to new legislation and policy initiatives, this was also part of a trend involving top-down policy-making; in other words, bottom-up policy-making through advocacy from libraries and the archival community remained weak. The present author has discussed issues regarding such trends in Japan in a previous paper (Koga, 2007a, p. 4–5).

One of the shortcomings of such political-driven, top-down policy-making is that the support for policy decisions may become weak once political change occurs. This situation, unfortunately, has become a reality

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① Prof. Takayama, Professor Emeritus of Library and Information Science, Keio University (Tokyo, Japan), also served as the Chair of the Blue-Ribbon Commission (2003) and the Panel advising the Chief Cabinet Secretary (2003–2005) for the improvement of archival and records management systems in Japan (Koga, 2005a, p. 53).

at the time of writing i. e. , May 2010. In fact, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won the lower house election in August 2009, thereby raising a political power shift away from the long-reigning Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). A number of congressmen in DPJ, including Mr. Osaka, have been eager to allow further access to government information and to promote the management of public records. Such congressmen even criticized the original Public Records Management bill as a step back from a proper legislation plan like the one the advisory panel presented in 2008, and the criticism is partly reflected in the finally enacted PRMA. The current cabinet, however, consists of a coalition made up of DPJ, the Social Democratic Party, and the People's New Party, who do not seem keen to promote PRMA compared to the former cabinets led by LDP and Komei (both Mr. Fukuda and Ms. Kamikawa belong to LDP). The reluctance of the current cabinet is reflected in the meager improvement in the funding and staffing of NAJ. At the time of writing, the future of the current cabinet remains unclear due to the overall political impasse. The author would like to emphasize at this point that the party overseeing any future cabinet needs to tackle the issues regarding implementation of PRMA seriously, not least because the act was approved unanimously by both Houses of Congress.

With regard to advocacy, the library community is eager to promote advocacy activities based on the Library Policy Program Committee of JLA. On the other hand, the archival community has not been engaged in such advocacy, though some groups, including the Japan Society of Archives Institutions, Japan Society for Archival Science, Records Management Society of Japan have submitted letters to the Japanese government in support of PRMA. As well as these groups, several other organizations, including the bar associations and citizens' group for freedom of government information, have been involved in advocacy activities for the better implementation of PRMA and are also engaged in other issues regarding access to government information. In the author's view, more concerted efforts in relation to advocacy activities and knowledge sharing with regard to policy-making will be required based on collaboration among various agencies, which will involve libraries, archives, bodies dealing with freedom of government information and other related areas, that will need to engage in more effective policy-making as a way of promoting greater access to government information.

#### 4.2 Awareness of government information as evidence

Although policy-making has invariably operated in a top-down way, the public in Japan seems to have, nevertheless, become aware of the importance of government information for the purpose of providing evidence. The number of scandals concerning management of public records seems to have been a major factor that has contributed to this improved awareness. Among these, the response to the mismanagement of pension records has been particularly extreme, as this directly relates to the rights of people to receive a pension, which has led to the realization among the general population that archived government information is not only of interest to historians, and it is precisely the evidence pertaining to government activities and transactions that is able to defend the rights of citizens.

The term "archival hegemony" may also reflect how government information can serve as evidence. "Archival hegemony" is a term that was coined by Dr. Shin Kawashima, Associate Professor of modern Chinese history at the University of Tokyo. According to Kawashima, archival hegemony refers to the situation in a country where a substantial amount of organized archives exists that can thereby exert greater hegemony with regard to historical description and diplomacy (Kato and Kawashima, 2010; see also, Kawashima, 2008). The Japanese government presently suffers from weak "archival hegemony" due to the possession of less organized archival materials mostly as a result of the improper destruction of records, especially during and after World War II, which gave rise to a disadvantage in diplomatic discussions with Asian countries, such as with regard to issues concerning post-war indemnification to these countries.

Questions relating to accountability and "archival hegemony" have, despite this, contributed to improved awareness as to the importance of government information and archives. In addition, this issue is not just restricted to government information collections at archival institutions but also concerns libraries, as both

relate to the sharing and access to government information that can potentially serve as evidence.

#### 4.3 Issues concerning the management of electronic records

As discussed above, although the three policy initiatives apply to a wide range of government information, these would have been more effective if integration and collaboration across such initiatives had been implemented. In this respect, collaboration with regard to electronic governmental information is especially needed.

One good example concerning this issue was discussed in relation to web archiving in section 3.2 and the collection of government publications in 3.3. Though not obvious, Section 9 of the Library Law deals mainly with access to government publications in hard-copy format. Although it is important for libraries to advocate further compliance with Section 9 on the part of national and local government organizations, this, however, continues to be inadequate as many government publications have already been transcribed into an electronic format, especially on the web. In this situation, free access to government information at libraries, which is the ultimate aim of Section 9, should be considered from a dual perspective; access to the collection of hard-copy government publications as well as the archives of government web content. More specifically, the archiving of government web contents cannot be carried out only by NDL, especially the archiving of web content for local government taking into consideration the needs of the local communities. It will therefore be necessary for NDL to collaborate with local public libraries and/or archives in order to promote web archiving. In fact, and although this is not the official position of NDL, one of the staff from NDL has emphasized the importance of such collaboration (Takeda, 2009).

As for the government records, PRMA does not fully cover issues regarding electronic record management, which are supposed to be covered by the policy initiatives to implement and reinforce the PRMA. The prevailing issues will include IT security, digital forensic, access management of classified information and records, migration and emulation of diverse electronic formats, and so forth. In addition, libraries and archives share many interests and challenges with regard to the management and archiving of electronic information, and the same applies to government information (Koga, 2005b). Collaboration between libraries and archives will therefore be required to facilitate the effectiveness of PRMA.

#### 4.4 Education and training for professional librarians and archivists

A formidable problem for the new legislation and policy initiatives concerns the fact that issues in relation to an appropriate system of education and training for professional librarians and archivists has been largely ignored.

In the case of archivists, the Public Archives Law was finally established in 1987 in order to set out a basic policy for the public archival institutions at both national and local level, which mainly deals with "official records as historical materials." Section 4 of this law mandates that public archives should hire "professional personnel" to perform investigations and research into official records. Supplementary Provision 2 of the law, however, states this: "For the time being, Public Archives to be established by local public entities may operate without appointing professional personnel..." In the aforementioned new legislation, there were no revisions to the Public Archives Law, or any proposals to delete the Supplementary Provision 2. In such a scenario, a number of universities, including Gakushuin University (Tokyo) and Beppu University (Beppu, Oita Pref.), established their own courses for education in archival science and for the training of archivists. Such new courses, however, are being established without an official accreditation system for professional archivists or a reliable job market for graduates. The Japan Society for Archival Science is now planning an official accreditation system for professional archivists.

In the case of librarians, the education and training system for librarians in public libraries was established at undergraduate level in the 1950s and is still valid. The problem is that this is the only system for librarians in Japan and there is no accreditation system for librarians for other kinds of libraries (e.g., academic or specialized), nor for those with advanced-skills such as in IT system management or the

treatment of manuscripts. As a result, each year, whereas over 10,000 graduates gain accreditation in public librarianship, less than 10% of these are employed at public libraries (Ueda, 2005). Having said this, there used to be a plan for revising such an accreditation system in the case of advanced librarianship, but this has come to only little progress. It has therefore remained difficult, in such a situation, to establish advanced librarianship for the purpose of dealing with government information in Japan.

## 5. Conclusion

It is certain that the new legislation and policy initiatives regarding government information in Japan, as discussed in this article, represent a significant change, not only for people in Japan, but also throughout the world, because this can lead to greater availability of government information on the Internet as well as through libraries and archives. In order to turn such possibilities into reality, however, we need to overcome a number of challenges, as outlined above, for better implementing policy initiatives. It is time to move on from simply discussing abstract concepts such as "right to know" toward developing concrete measures to manage, archive, and provide access to government information, records, publications, websites, and so on. In this respect, an appeal to—and the raising of the visibility—regarding the skills concerning such measures may be key to providing further access to government information and for developing services concerning government information at libraries and archives.

Finally, the author hopes that the points made in this paper will help disseminate the various policies and practices regarding implementation of policy initiatives concerning government information across to a broader audience in the near future.

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